

Book reviews

A Handbook of Venereal Diseases. By WILLIAM M. PLATTS. 1972. Pp. 89, 5 diagrams. Peryer, Christchurch, New Zealand. (\$2.00)

Several short accounts of sexually transmitted diseases have been published recently. The latest comes from New Zealand, where Dr. Platts is Consultant Venereologist to the Department of Health. This is a short book, without illustrations, and some of the descriptions of diseases are of necessity very brief. The approach to the subject is traditional. One third of the book is devoted to syphilis, which is described in detail, and there is an excellent chapter on serology. The section on gonorrhoea is less satisfactory, owing to its brevity. Gonococcal vulvovaginitis in children, gonococcal ophthalmia, and rectal gonorrhoea in homosexual men are mentioned only in passing, and infections of the pharynx not at all. No reference is made to the use of fluorescent tests in the diagnosis of gonorrhoea.

The author leaves himself little space for the remaining genital infections. The description of non-specific urethritis is disappointingly short for such a common disease, and some would not agree that there is 'no point' in examining female contacts. Genital warts are not commoner in the uncircumcised. There is no reference to herpetic cervicitis, and local neomycin should not be used in the treatment of genital herpes because of the risk of sensitization. In discussing the management of patients with vaginal discharge, the author does not mention the value of cervical cytology or refer to the important fact that the discharge may sometimes be due to serious cervical or uterine disease.

The chapters on history and epidemiology, and on the law in New Zealand regarding venereal disease are interesting. However, the book is unbalanced by too great an emphasis on syphilis, with insufficient space devoted to other infections. Medical students could read some of the chapters with profit, but general practitioners would not find sufficiently detailed advice on the diagnosis and management of common genital infections.

J. D. Oriel

Trachoma and Related Disorders. Edited by R. L. NICHOLS (1971). Pp. 586, 122 figs. Excerpta Medica, Amsterdam. (£13.65)

This book contains a collection of papers which were read at a symposium in 1970, together with accounts of the discussion that they provoked. The occasion was a colloquium on Trachoma and Related Disorders caused by Chlamydial Agents, held in Boston, Massachusetts;

this was the third such meeting held since 1961 when interest was aroused by the culture of the organism by T'ang.

The meeting covered all possible aspects from basic metabolism and molecular biology to the diagnostic, clinical, and epidemiological aspects of the *Chlamydia* group of agents, and included a great deal on the immunobiology of host response and laboratory classification.

There is much to interest the venereologist from both the clinical and laboratory point of view, as there is mounting evidence that genital infection by agents of this group is widespread and that transmission is usually sexual, at least in western 'advanced' societies.

Of the clinical papers presented, most, as is to be expected, report various aspects of cases of eye disease in different groups. Of particular interest to venereologists is the section including two papers read by Dr. E. M. C. Dunlop of The London Hospital and the Institute of Ophthalmology in London. In these he reported the incidence of infection by these agents measured by cell culture in patients suffering from non-specific urethritis and ocular infection due to TRIC agent. He reported the isolation of *Chlamydia* from the urethra in eighteen of 41 cases of NSU, a series that has since been extended and was reported at the Jubilee meeting of the MSSVD.

For those whose interests lie in laboratory studies in venereology, there are several papers of considerable interest. Any work in the field must have an efficient system for culturing agent. For diagnostic purposes the simplified one-passage cell culture technique described by Dr. S. Darougar of the Institute of Ophthalmology, London, offers a considerable saving in time without loss of efficiency. An important addition to culture in studying the role of these agents in sexually transmitted disease is the immunofluorescence technique. In the section on immunotyping, Dr. San-Pin Wang from Seattle, USA, describes a micro-immunofluorescence method. This has considerable potential as it can be used to show the specificity of antigen and antibody both qualitatively and quantitatively. The ability to type isolates and to monitor levels of antibody to specific types in patients and in their sexual partners can clearly shed much light on the role of this group of agents in sexually transmitted disease.

Few venereologists will wish to pay the considerable price of this volume themselves, but any with departmental libraries or in a position to advise other medical libraries should press hard to ensure that they have ready access to a copy. The papers presented are of a high standard and the resultant collection is an excellent book of reference.

J. Vaughan-Jackson

Notes

Association des Dermatologistes et Syphiligraphes de Langue Française
XIV Congress, Geneva, May 31 to June 3, 1973

Members of the MSSVD are cordially invited to attend this congress. The chief subjects will be 'Toxidermies' and 'Vascularites Allergiques'. Further information may be obtained from the President, Prof. P. Laugier, Clinique Universitaire de Dermatologie, Hôpital Cantonal, 1211 Geneva 4, Switzerland.

International Union against the Venereal Diseases and Treponematoses
27th General Assembly, Venice, May 27 to 31, 1972

The April issue of the *British Journal of Venereal Diseases* will be largely devoted to a selection of the English language papers given at the Congress, and will also include the periodical *Bulletin* of the I.U.V.D.T.